

Figurative Language

Allegory

- A story with two meanings, a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning.
- Like a symbol, it conveys abstract ideas to get a point across; however it differs from a symbol in that it is a complete narrative
- Dante's *Inferno* is an example of this extended metaphor.

Alliteration

- Repetition of consonant sounds.
- The repeated consonant in this sound pattern usually comes at the beginning of words.
- "While I nodded, nearly napping" from Poe's *The Raven* is an example of this.

Allusion

- A reference in a literary work to something outside of the work.
- If you referred to someone as a Scrooge, you would be using this literary device.
- In *Romeo and Juliet*, Montague's reference to Aurora, the Roman goddess of the dawn, is an example of this.

Anaphora

- In rhetoric it is the repetition of a word or set of words in successive sentences, clauses, or phrases.
- *A Tale of Two Cities* starts out, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." In this passage the repetition of "it was" is an example of this rhetorical device.
- Another example is in *Night* by Elie Wiesel. Seven sentences in a row begin, "Never shall I forget."

Anastrophe

- It is the inversion of the normal word order for emphasis.
- "To war went he" is an example.
- In George Lucas's *Star Wars*, Yoda uses this rhetorical device. An example is "Ready are you?"

Anthropomorphism

- The portraying of animals or inanimate objects as people. It is an extreme form of personification.
- Winnie the Pooh, Tigger and Piglet and other characters in children's books are examples of this device
- The mice and rats in *The Rats of NIMH*, by Robert C. O'Brien, are examples of this device.

Antithesis

- The rhetorical contrast of ideas by means of parallel construction.
- An example is Neil Armstrong's statement "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."
- In *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare, Brutus's statement "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more" is an example.

Apostrophe

- It is when someone not there or something not human is addressed as if alive and present.
- An example of this is found in the first line of "Bright Star," John Keats: "Bright star, would I were stedfast (sic) as thou art-."
- This device is usually used when a speaker breaks off and addresses someone or something not there.

Assonance

- The repetition of vowel sounds within neighboring words.
- An example of this poetic device is the phrase "From the molten-golden notes" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells."
- Another example from "The Bells," is this line: "hear mellow wedding-bells."

Asyndeton

- Leaving out all the "ands."
- An example is "I came, I saw, I conquered." (Attributed to Julius Caesar by Plutarch.)

Characterization

- A method used by an author to develop a character.
- It is how the author conveys to the readers a character's personality, values, physical attributes, and other traits.

Clichés

- Overused phrases or expressions.
- "it's raining cats and dogs" is one example.
- Because these are used so often, they are often ineffective.

Connotation

- The associated meaning of a word or a phrase.
- An antonym is *denotation*, or the clearly expressed meaning of a word or phrase.
- The word *slender* has a positive connotation for most people, while the word *skinny* has a negative connotation.

Figurative Language

Dialect

- Language that is characteristic of a particular region or group.
- "This is a handy cove, and a pleasant sittyated grog-shop," from *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson
- "Tom, it was middling warm in school, warn't it? *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, by Mark Twain.

Dialogue

- The spoken words between characters in a literary work.
- The conversation between characters in a drama or narrative.
- Dialogue gives a literary work a more conversational flow.

Diction

- A writer's choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning.
- Irvine Welsh's "Trainspotting" employs the characters' street Scotch-English diction.

Epilogue

- A concluding section at the end of a literary work.
- In a play, this may be used to summarize or comment on the main action.
- Its antonym is *prologue*.

Epistrophe

- The opposite of anaphora – the *end* is repeated.
- 'If women are healthy and educated, **their families will flourish**. If women are free from violence, **their families will flourish**. If women have a chance to work ... **their families will flourish**.' Hillary Clinton.

Ethos

- Establishing the character and credibility of your speaker.
- Using reputable sources to support his or her ideas enhances a writer's ethos.
- Using words or terminology incorrectly is one way for an author to develop poor ethos and lose the confidence of the reader.

Euphemism

- The substitution of a less explicit term for an offensive, explicit term.
- Saying a person "passed away" rather than "died" is an example.
- Saying an animal is being "put to sleep" is another example.

Figurative Language

- In this type of language, the words and phrases go beyond their literal meaning.
- Simile, metaphor and personification are three common types of this kind of language.
- Idioms are a form of this type of language.

Flashback

- This narrative technique interrupts the chronological sequence of events to describe past events.
- It can help the reader understand what is going on in the present by explaining what happened in the past.
- It can give the reader clues about a character's motivation.

Foil

- A character who contrasts with another character, usually the protagonist.
- The practical Sancho Panza is one such character; he is contrasted with the idealistic Don Quixote.
- Dr. Watson contrasted with Sherlock Holmes.

Foreshadowing

- When an author drops hints about things that will occur later in the story.
- Shakespeare used this technique in *Julius Caesar* when the soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March.
- Shakespeare used this technique in *Romeo and Juliet* when the characters say that they would rather die than live apart.

Genre (Literary)

- A category of literature.
- Examples: science fiction, historical fiction and mystery.
- 3 basic literary genres: poetry, drama, prose.

Figurative Language

Hyperbole

- An exaggeration.
- If your friend says to you, "I tried to call you a million times," it is likely hyperbole.
- Although you may think this is a simile, it is hyperbole: "He is as tall as a giraffe."

Idiom

- A term or phrase whose meaning cannot be deduced from its literal definitions.
- "A little bird told me."
- "Don't put all your eggs in one basket."

Imagery

- The use of descriptive language that appeals to the readers' senses.
- Language that stimulates one or more of the senses: hearing, taste, touch, smell, or sight.
- From *The Call of the Wild* by London: **Big** house; **sunkissed** valley; **wide, cool** veranda; **green** pastures; kept **cool** in the **hot** afternoon.

Irony

- Refers to how something is not as it seems. Types include verbal, dramatic, and situational.
- Verbal is the use of words to express something other than, and usually the opposite of, the literal meaning. Sarcasm.
- Situational irony is an outcome contrary to what was or might have been expected.

Metaphor

- A comparison between two unlike things without the use of *like* or *as*.
- This figure of speech says something is something else when in reality it is not.
- In *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott, Jo calls Amy "a little goose."

Metonymy

- Refers to the substitution of one term with another that is loosely associated with that term.
- "The pen is mightier than the sword," The word *pen* has been substituted for "written words that express thoughts" and *sword* has been substituted for "military action."

Mood

- The feeling the author creates for the readers.
- The atmosphere or emotional condition created by the work.
- The general feeling the reader gets from reading the work.

Onomatopoeia

- The use of words that sound like the sounds they describe.
- Words such as buzz and hiss are examples.
- In "The Bells" Poe uses this device to let us hear the different kinds of bells: "tinkling" sleigh bells, "clanging" fire bells, "chiming" wedding bells.

Oxymoron

- A figure of speech that combines two usually contradictory terms.
- An example of this is "deafening silence."
- In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, "Parting is such sweet sorrow" contains one.

Paradox

- An assertion that seems to make no sense, but that has some truth in it on closer examination.
- A statement that seems contradictory but reveals a truth.
- G.K. Chesterton's statement that "spies do not look like spies" is an example.

Parallelism

- Similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, or complete units of compositions.
- "Live in your world, play in ours." (advertising slogan for Sony PlayStation 2)
- "New roads; new ruts." (G. K. Chesterton)

Pathos

- An appeal to the reader through emotion.
- "We are not the first / Who with best meaning have incurred the worst." *King Lear* by Shakespeare.

Personification

- The bestowing of human qualities on inanimate objects, ideas and animals.
- "The sun peeped into the window."
- "There are smiling fields and waving trees." *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens.

Figurative Language

Point of View

- The perspective from which a story is told.
- First person p.o.v. A character is telling the story. "I moved quietly through the fields."
- Third person p.o.v. A narrator tells the story. "He moved quietly through the fields."

Polysyndeton

- Using many ands or other conjunctions.
- I said, "Who killed him?" and he said, "I don't know who killed him but he's dead all right," and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows broke and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat where I had her inside Mango Bay and she was all right only she was full of water. Hemingway, *After the Storm*.

Portmanteau Words

- Blended words.
- *Brunch* for breakfast and lunch, *motel* for motor and hotel.
- Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice that "slithy means lithe and slimy." Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass*.

Pun

- Figurative language uses words that sound the same but have different meanings to create a humorous or rhetorical effect.
- A humorous play on words that are similar in sound but different in meaning.
- "A poached egg isn't a poached egg unless it's been stolen from the woods..." *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* by Dahl.

Rhetorical Question

- A question that is posed for a desired effect without the expectation of a reply.
- Is the sky blue? Why not? How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

Sarcasm

- A form of verbal irony in which a person says the opposite of what he or she means.
- In *Crispin, the Cross of Lead*, by Avi, Bear uses this form of irony in response to Crispin's short answers: "You have a gifted way of speech."
- It may be described as verbal irony that is intended to insult or ridicule.

Satire

- A literary work that pokes fun at individual or societal weaknesses.
- Although usually meant to be funny, its main purpose is to attack something of which the author disapproves.

Simile

- A comparison between two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*.
- This figure of speech says something *is* like something else although the two are quite different.
- In *The Lost World*, Conan Doyle used a simile to describe the male pterodactyls: "They sat like gigantic old women, wrapped in...shawls."

Spoonerisms

- Words or phrases in which letters or syllables get swapped.
- Usually accidental but may also be intentionally done for effect.
- Named after Reverend William Archibald Spooner who supposedly said things like, "Is the bean dizzy?" instead of, "Is the dean busy?"

Stereotype

- A generalization about a group of people.
- The attributing of a defined set of characteristics, positive or negative, to a group of people.

Style

- Refers to an author's manner of writing, including grammar, vocabulary, the use of figurative language and other factors.
- Sentence structure, use of dialogue, vocabulary, point of view, character development, and tone.
- Examples: straightforward, descriptive, scientific, fanciful.

Suspense

- A quality that makes readers wonder what will happen next.
- Apprehension about what will happen.
- Mysteries are usually suspenseful.

Figurative Language

Symbolism

- The use of an object, character or idea to represent something else.
- The use of coffee to represent Jethro's coming of age in *Across Five Aprils*, by Irene Hunt, is an example.
- The mockingbird to represent innocence in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

Synecdoche

- A part is used to represent the whole or the whole is used to represent the part.
- Using the word *hands* to represent those aboard the ship in "All hands on deck."
- Using the *USA* to stand for the athletes who actually won in "The USA won ten gold medals in today's events."
- Although similar to metonymy, metonymy uses something more loosely associated with the concept as a replacement.

Theme

- The main idea of a literary work; the idea the author wants to convey.
- The importance of family is a common theme.
- Good versus evil.

Tone

- The author's attitude toward the writing.
- It may be serious, humorous, sarcastic, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, solemn, or objective, to name several.
- Not to be confused with mood, this is the writer's attitude toward what he or she is writing; mood is the feeling the reader gets when reading it.

Understatement

- Stating something less strongly than the facts seem to warrant.
- Describing a hurricane as "just a little breeze."
- A litote is a form of understatement.

Zeugma

- The use of a verb to modify or govern two or more words although it has a different sense for each or is appropriate for only one.
- "You are free to execute your laws, and your citizens, as you see fit."
(*Star Trek: The Next Generation*)
- "Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave"
from Dicken's *Pickwick*.